

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

# STRATASCAN™



Project name:  
**Bell Farm, Kempston, Bedford**

Client:  
**CgMs Consulting**

**April 2015**

Job ref:  
**J8229**

Report author:  
**Rebecca Davies BSc (Hons)**

# GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

Project name:

**Bell Farm, Kempston, Bedford**

Client:

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Job ref:

**J8229**

Techniques:

**Detailed magnetic survey –  
Gradiometry**

Survey date:

**25th - 27th March 2015**

Site centred at:

**TL 018 462**

Post code:

**MK43 9AT**

Field team:

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## 1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A detailed gradiometry survey was conducted over approximately 11 hectares of agricultural land. No features of probable archaeological origin have been identified, despite the potential for prehistoric or Roman remains. A small number of linear anomalies may be of archaeological or agricultural origin, while two small discrete features may be related to former backfilled pits, or the line of a field boundary. The remaining features are natural or modern in origin and include evidence of ploughing, scattered magnetic debris, magnetic disturbance and magnetic spikes that are likely to be modern rubbish. A large area of made ground and track ways are related to the construction of the A428, and are masking any archaeology in this area.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 *Background synopsis*

Stratascan were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area outlined for commercial development. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by CgMs Consulting.

### 2.2 *Site location*

The site is located to the south-west of Kempston, Bedfordshire at OS ref. TL 018 462. The A428, Branston Way, lies along the north-eastern boundary of the site, with agricultural land to the north and west, and a nature reserve to the south-west.

### 2.3 *Description of site*

The survey area is approximately 11 hectares of mostly flat, unobstructed agricultural land.

### 2.4 *Geology and soils*

The underlying geology is comprised of mudstone of the Peterborough Member (British Geological Survey website). No drift geology is recorded across the site (British Geological Survey website).

The overlying soils are known as Evesham 3 which are typical calcareous pelosols. These consist of slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 6 South East England).

## 2.5 **Site history and archaeological potential**

Extract from "Bell Farm, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire – Archaeological Impact Assessment" (CgMs Consulting, 2015):

*"Parts of the central and eastern areas of the site were stripped during works associated with the construction of the A428. Any archaeological features in these areas are expected to have been heavily disturbed and only deeper features will have survived with any legibility. The western part of the site appears to be relatively undisturbed.*

*The western and central areas of the site contain evidence of a Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age boundary ditch and Roman agricultural trenches. A Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age pit alignment and a Late Iron Age/Romano-British boundary ditch also appear likely to extend into the central and eastern areas of the site. These features are considered to be of local to regional importance."*

## 2.6 **Survey objectives**

The objective of the survey was to locate any features of possible archaeological origin in order that they may be assessed prior to development. A further objective was to establish the extent of modern disturbance within the site and to assess the viability of geophysical survey within those areas – to determine the usefulness of extending this survey across the whole of the application area.

## 2.7 **Survey methods**

This report and all fieldwork have been conducted in accordance with both the English Heritage guidelines outlined in the document: *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation, 2008* and with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists document *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey*.

Given the potential for prehistoric and Roman remains, detailed magnetic survey (gradiometry) was used as an efficient and effective method of locating archaeological anomalies. More information regarding this technique is included in Appendix A.

## 2.8 **Processing, presentation and interpretation of results**

### 2.8.1 **Processing**

Processing is performed using specialist software. This can emphasise various aspects contained within the data but which are often not easily seen in the raw data. Basic processing of the magnetic data involves 'flattening' the background levels with respect to adjacent traverses and adjacent grids. Once the basic processing has flattened the background it is then possible to carry out further processing which may include low pass filtering to reduce 'noise' in the data and hence emphasise the archaeological or man-made anomalies.

The following schedule shows the basic processing carried out on all minimally processed gradiometer data used in this report:

1. *Destripe* (Removes striping effects caused by zero-point discrepancies between different sensors and walking directions)
2. *Destagger* (Removes zigzag effects caused by inconsistent walking speeds on sloping, uneven or overgrown terrain)

### 2.8.2 Presentation of results and interpretation

The presentation of the data for each site involves a print-out of the minimally processed data both as a greyscale plot and a colour plot showing extreme magnetic value. Magnetic anomalies have been identified and plotted onto the 'Abstraction and Interpretation of Anomalies' drawing for the site.

## 3 RESULTS

The detailed magnetic gradiometer survey conducted at Bell Farm has identified a number of anomalies that have been characterised as being either of *possible* archaeological origin.

The difference between *probable* and *possible* archaeological origin is a confidence rating. Features identified within the dataset that form recognisable archaeological patterns or seem to be related to a deliberate historical act have been interpreted as being of a probable archaeological origin.

Features of possible archaeological origin tend to be more amorphous anomalies which may have similar magnetic attributes in terms of strength or polarity but are difficult to classify as being archaeological or natural.

The following list of numbered anomalies refers to numerical labels on the interpretation plots.

### 3.1 Probable Archaeology

No probable archaeology has been identified within the survey area.

### 3.2 Possible Archaeology

- 1 Positive linear anomalies in the west and south east of the site. These are indicative of former cut features of possible archaeological or agricultural origin. Those in the east may be related to the construction of the A428.

- 2 Two small, discrete positive anomalies in the west of the site. These are indicative of former cut features, such as backfilled pits, and are of possible archaeological origin. They may indicate the location of a former field boundary extending south from the current line (Anomaly 2a).

### 3.3 *Medieval/Post-Medieval Agriculture*

- 3 Closely spaced, parallel linear anomalies across the north of the site. These are related to modern agricultural activity such as ploughing. Given the magnetically weak response of these features their age cannot be determined with accuracy, however they may possibly be related to medieval ridge and furrow, indicated by the desk-based assessment.

### 3.4 *Other Anomalies*

- 4 A large area of strong magnetic debris in the southern field. This is an area of made ground and is related to the construction of the A428 to the north. The effects of this debris are likely to be masking any archaeological anomalies in the area.
- 5 A linear area of scattered magnetic debris in the south of the site. This is related to a track way used in the construction of the A428, and can be seen on aerial photography of the site.
- 6 Linear anomalies in the south of the site. These are related to track ways used in the construction of the A428 and can be seen on aerial photography of the site.
- 7 A strong, bipolar linear anomaly in the north of the site. This is likely to be related to an underground service such as a pipe.
- 8 Areas of amorphous magnetic variation in the west and centre of the site. These are likely to be natural, i.e. geological, in origin. Anomaly 8b is of uncertain origin, and may possibly be related to modern surface debris.
- 9 Two areas of scattered magnetic debris in north of the site. These are likely to be modern in origin.
- 10 Areas of magnetic disturbance are the result of substantial nearby ferrous metal objects such as fences and underground services. These effects can mask weaker archaeological anomalies, but on this site have not affected a significant proportion of the area.
- 11 A number of magnetic 'spikes' (strong focussed values with associated antipolar response) indicate ferrous metal objects. These are likely to be modern rubbish.

## 4 DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

Mudstone geologies are known to give variable responses for gradiometer survey. In this case, the data across the north of the site has a generally uniform appearance. This suggests that the underlying geology is magnetically weak and thus archaeological features are not able to produce strongly contrasting anomalies.

The large area of magnetic debris in the south of the site will mask the response from any weaker archaeological features present. Having been stripped during works associated with the construction of the A428 it is likely that any remaining archaeological features within this area have been heavily disturbed and will probably not have been detected.

Figure 5 within the Archaeological Impact Assessment (CgMs 2015) shows that the only archaeology known to extend into the undisturbed (western) extent of the site are shallow linear features, interpreted as possible bedding trenches to the north-west. These are unlikely to be detectable within the underlying geology. Within the western (undisturbed) area of the site the geophysics has demonstrably worked. It has picked up clear evidence for agricultural activity and also a number of linear and discrete features. Therefore it is unlikely that this area of the site contains dense or significant archaeological features. Within the eastern field surveyed, the modern disturbance dominates the data and it is not therefore possible to determine what, if any, archaeological features might be present.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The survey at Bell Farm, Kempston has identified a small number of linear anomalies which may be of archaeological or agricultural origin. Two possible backfilled pits may be archaeological, or possibly mark the line of a former field boundary. The remaining features are natural or modern in origin and include a large area of made ground related to the construction of the A428, which is masking any archaeological anomalies that may be present in this area. Evidence of ploughing, an underground service, magnetic disturbance from nearby ferrous metal objects, scattered magnetic debris and magnetic spikes that are likely to be modern rubbish are also present.



## 6 REFERENCES

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Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983. *Soils of England and Wales, Sheet 6 South East England*.

## APPENDIX A – METHODOLOGY & SURVEY EQUIPMENT

### ***Grid locations***

The location of the survey grids has been plotted together with the referencing information. Grids were set out using a Leica 705auto Total Station and referenced to suitable topographic features around the perimeter of the site or a Leica Smart Rover RTK GPS.

An RTK GPS (Real-time Kinematic Global Positioning System) can locate a point on the ground to a far greater accuracy than a standard GPS unit. A standard GPS suffers from errors created by satellite orbit errors, clock errors and atmospheric interference, resulting in an accuracy of 5m-10m. An RTK system uses a single base station receiver and a number of mobile units. The base station re-broadcasts the phase of the carrier it measured, and the mobile units compare their own phase measurements with those they received from the base station. A SmartNet RTK GPS uses Ordnance Survey's network of over 100 fixed base stations to give an accuracy of around 0.01m.

### ***Survey equipment and gradiometer configuration***

Although the changes in the magnetic field resulting from differing features in the soil are usually weak, changes as small as 0.2 nanoTeslas (nT) in an overall field strength of 48,000nT, can be accurately detected using an appropriate instrument.

The mapping of the anomaly in a systematic manner will allow an estimate of the type of material present beneath the surface. Strong magnetic anomalies will be generated by buried iron-based objects or by kilns or hearths. More subtle anomalies such as pits and ditches can be seen if they contain more humic material which is normally rich in magnetic iron oxides when compared with the subsoil.

To illustrate this point, the cutting and subsequent silting or backfilling of a ditch may result in a larger volume of weakly magnetic material being accumulated in the trench compared to the undisturbed subsoil. A weak magnetic anomaly should therefore appear in plan along the line of the ditch.

The magnetic survey was carried out using a dual sensor Grad601-2 Magnetic Gradiometer manufactured by Bartington Instruments Ltd. The instrument consists of two fluxgates very accurately aligned to nullify the effects of the Earth's magnetic field. Readings relate to the difference in localised magnetic anomalies compared with the general magnetic background. The Grad601-2 consists of two high stability fluxgate gradiometers suspended on a single frame. Each gradiometer has a 1m separation between the sensing elements so enhancing the response to weak anomalies.

### ***Sampling interval***

Readings were taken at 0.25m centres along traverses 1m apart. This equates to 3600 sampling points in a full 30m x 30m grid.

### ***Depth of scan and resolution***

The Grad 601-2 has a typical depth of penetration of 0.5m to 1.0m, though strongly magnetic objects may be visible at greater depths. The collection of data at 0.25m centres provides an optimum methodology for the task balancing cost and time with resolution.

### ***Data capture***

The readings are logged consecutively into the data logger which in turn is daily down-loaded into a portable computer whilst on site. At the end of each site survey, data is transferred to the office for processing and presentation.

## APPENDIX B – BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MAGNETIC SURVEY

Detailed magnetic survey can be used to effectively define areas of past human activity by mapping spatial variation and contrast in the magnetic properties of soil, subsoil and bedrock.

Weakly magnetic iron minerals are always present within the soil and areas of enhancement relate to increases in *magnetic susceptibility* and permanently magnetised *thermoremanent* material.

Magnetic susceptibility relates to the induced magnetism of a material when in the presence of a magnetic field. This magnetism can be considered as effectively permanent as it exists within the Earth's magnetic field. Magnetic susceptibility can become enhanced due to burning and complex biological or fermentation processes.

Thermoremanence is a permanent magnetism acquired by iron minerals that, after heating to a specific temperature known as the Curie Point, are effectively demagnetised followed by re-magnetisation by the Earth's magnetic field on cooling. Thermoremanent archaeological features can include hearths and kilns and material such as brick and tile may be magnetised through the same process.

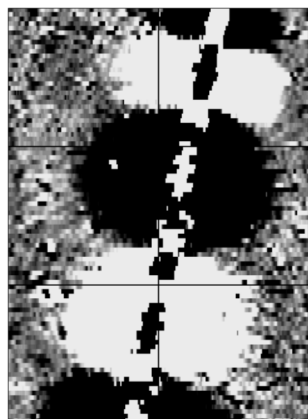
Silting and deliberate infilling of ditches and pits with magnetically enhanced soil creates a relative contrast against the much lower levels of magnetism within the subsoil into which the feature is cut. Systematic mapping of magnetic anomalies will produce linear and discrete areas of enhancement allowing assessment and characterisation of subsurface features. Material such as subsoil and non-magnetic bedrock used to create former earthworks and walls may be mapped as areas of lower enhancement compared to surrounding soils.

Magnetic survey is carried out using a fluxgate gradiometer which is a passive instrument consisting of two sensors mounted vertically 1m apart. The instrument is carried about 30cm above the ground surface and the top sensor measures the Earth's magnetic field whilst the lower sensor measures the same field but is also more affected by any localised buried field. The difference between the two sensors will relate to the strength of a magnetic field created by a buried feature, if no field is present the difference will be close to zero as the magnetic field measured by both sensors will be the same.

Factors affecting the magnetic survey may include soil type, local geology, previous human activity, disturbance from modern services etc.

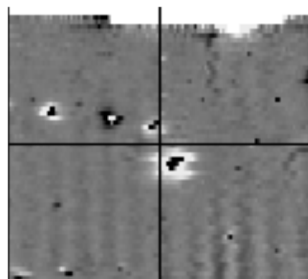
## APPENDIX C – GLOSSARY OF MAGNETIC ANOMALIES

### Bipolar



A bipolar anomaly is one that is composed of both a positive response and a negative response. It can be made up of any number of positive responses and negative responses. For example a pipeline consisting of alternating positive and negative anomalies is said to be bipolar. See also dipolar which has only one area of each polarity. The interpretation of the anomaly will depend on the magnitude of the magnetic field strength. A weak response may be caused by a clay field drain while a strong response will probably be caused by a metallic service.

### Dipolar

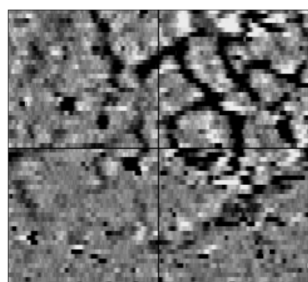


This consists of a single positive anomaly with an associated negative response. There should be no separation between the two polarities of response. These responses will be created by a single feature. The interpretation of the anomaly will depend on the magnitude of the magnetic measurements. A very strong anomaly is likely to be caused by a ferrous object.

### Positive anomaly with associated negative response

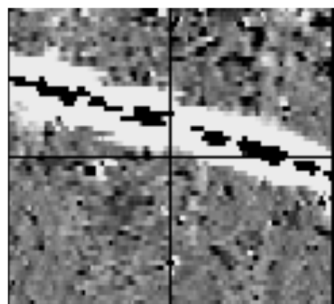
See bipolar and dipolar.

### Positive linear



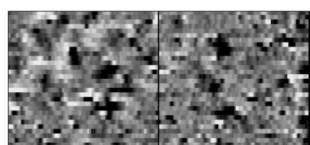
A linear response which is entirely positive in polarity. These are usually related to in-filled cut features where the fill material is magnetically enhanced compared to the surrounding matrix. They can be caused by ditches of an archaeological origin, but also former field boundaries, ploughing activity and some may even have a natural origin.

### Positive linear anomaly with associated negative response



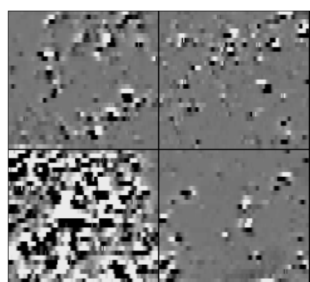
A positive linear anomaly which has a negative anomaly located adjacently. This will be caused by a single feature. In the example shown this is likely to be a single length of wire/cable probably relating to a modern service. Magnetically weaker responses may relate to earthwork style features and field boundaries.

### Positive point/area



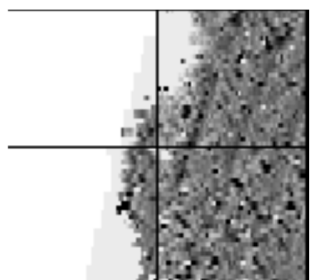
These are generally spatially small responses, perhaps covering just 3 or 4 reading nodes. They are entirely positive in polarity. Similar to positive linear anomalies they are generally caused by in-filled cut features. These include pits of an archaeological origin, possible tree bowls or other naturally occurring depressions in the ground.

### Magnetic debris



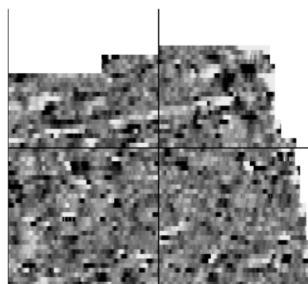
Magnetic debris consists of numerous dipolar responses spread over an area. If the amplitude of response is low ( $\pm 3nT$ ) then the origin is likely to represent general ground disturbance with no clear cause, it may be related to something as simple as an area of dug or mixed earth. A stronger anomaly ( $\pm 250nT$ ) is more indicative of a spread of ferrous debris. Moderately strong anomalies may be the result of a spread of thermoremanent material such as bricks or ash.

### Magnetic disturbance



Magnetic disturbance is high amplitude and can be composed of either a bipolar anomaly, or a single polarity response. It is essentially associated with magnetic interference from modern ferrous structures such as fencing, vehicles or buildings, and as a result is commonly found around the perimeter of a site near to boundary fences.

### Negative linear

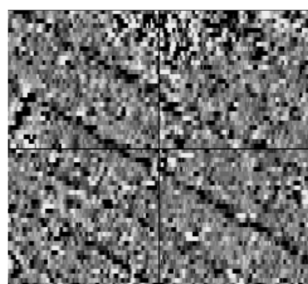


A linear response which is entirely negative in polarity. These are generally caused by earthen banks where material with a lower magnetic magnitude relative to the background top soil is built up. See also ploughing activity.

### Negative point/area

Opposite to positive point anomalies these responses may be caused by raised areas or earthen banks. These could be of an archaeological origin or may have a natural origin.

### Ploughing activity



Ploughing activity can often be visualised by a series of parallel linear anomalies. These can be of either positive polarity or negative polarity depending on site specifics. It can be difficult to distinguish between ancient ploughing and more modern ploughing. Clues such as the separation of each linear, straightness, strength of response and cross cutting relationships can be used to aid this, although none of these can be guaranteed to differentiate between different phases of activity.

### Polarity

Term used to describe the measurement of the magnetic response. An anomaly can have a positive polarity (values above 0nT) and/or a negative polarity (values below 0nT).

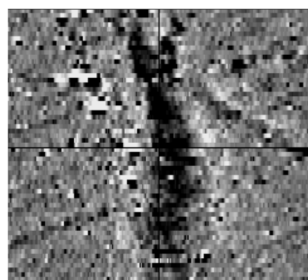
### Strength of response

The amplitude of a magnetic response is an important factor in assigning an interpretation to a particular anomaly. For example a positive anomaly covering a 10m<sup>2</sup> area may have values up to around 3000nT, in which case it is likely to be caused by modern magnetic interference. However, the same size and shaped anomaly but with values up to only 4nT may have a natural origin. Colour plots are used to show the amplitude of response.

### Thermoremanent response

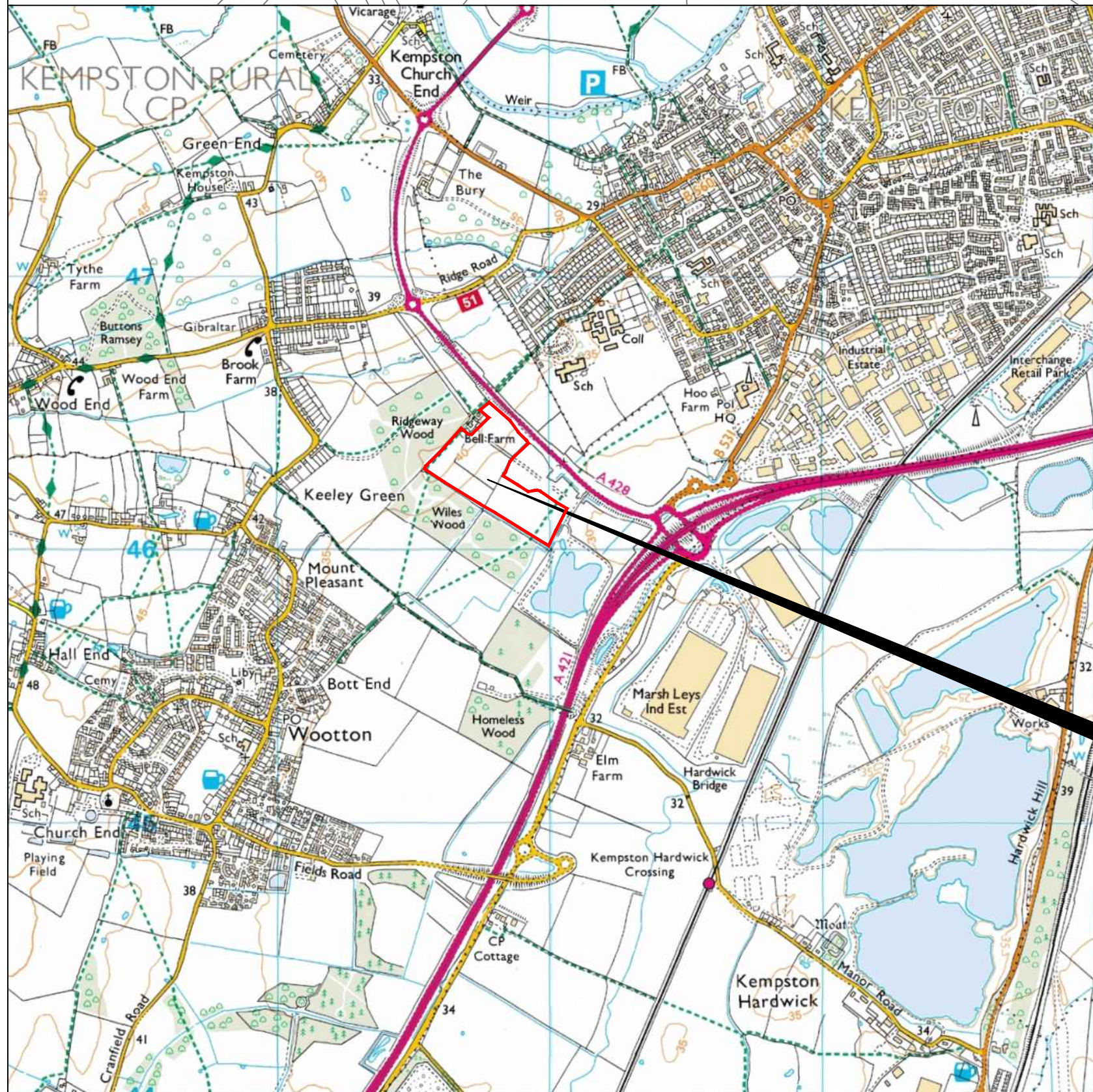
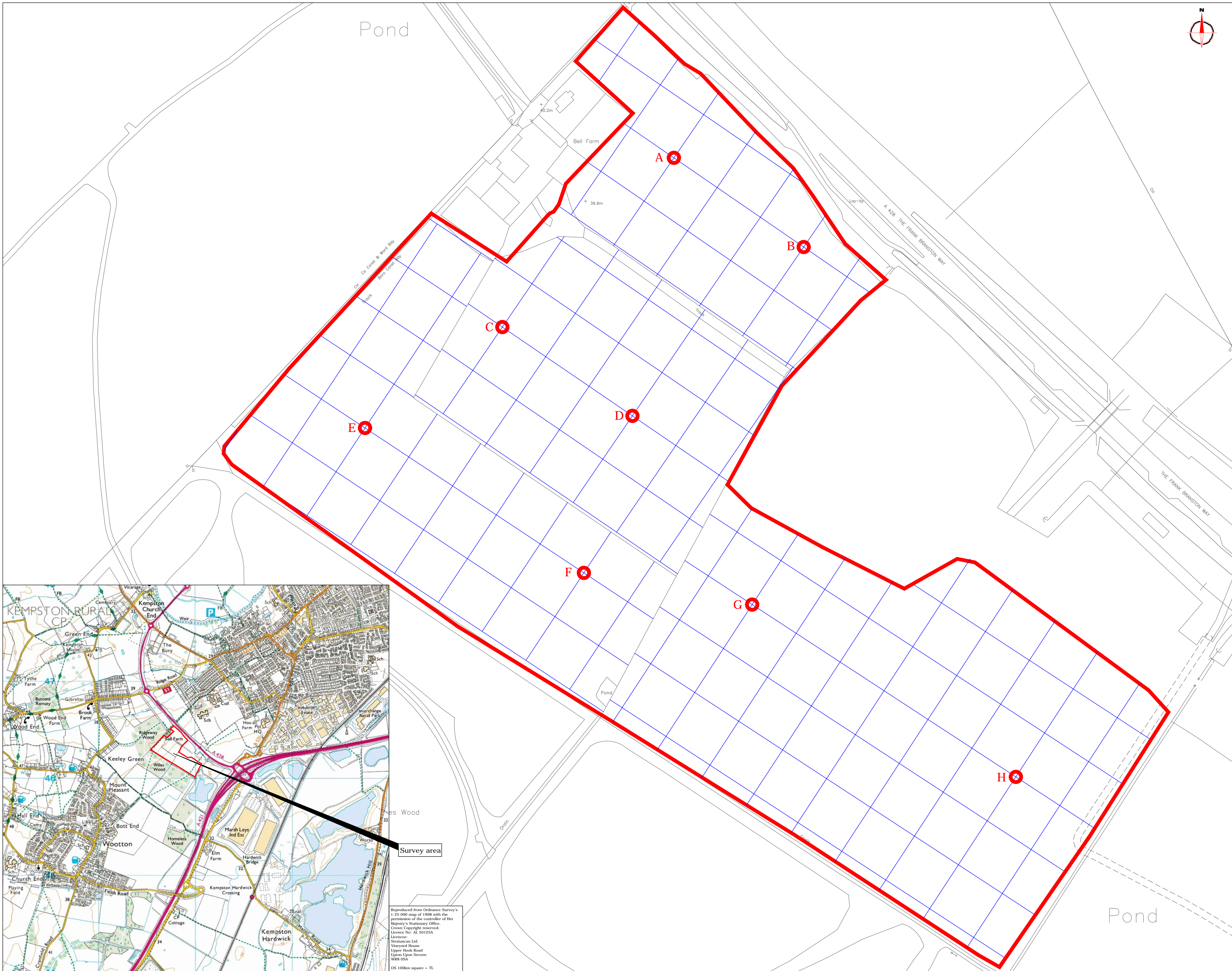
A feature which has been subject to heat may result in it acquiring a magnetic field. This can be anything up to approximately +/-100 nT in value. These features include clay fired drains, brick, bonfires, kilns, hearths and even pottery. If the heat application has occurred in situ (e.g. a kiln) then the response is likely to be bipolar compared to if the heated objects have been disturbed and moved relative to each other, in which case they are more likely to take an irregular form and may display a debris style response (e.g. ash).

### Weak background variations



Weakly magnetic wide scale variations within the data can sometimes be seen within sites. These usually have no specific structure but can often appear curvy and sinuous in form. They are likely to be the result of natural features, such as soil creep, dried up (or seasonal) streams. They can also be caused by changes in the underlying geology or soil type which may contain unpredictable distributions of magnetic minerals, and are usually apparent in several locations across a site.





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 OS 100km square = TL



Amendments		
Issue No.	Date	Description
-	-	-
-	-	-
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Site centred on NGR TL 018 462

**OS REFERENCING INFORMATION**

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C	501709.43, 246364.79
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E	501630.95, 246307.13
F	501756.03, 246224.33
G	501852.17, 246206.19
H	502002.85, 246107.73

Job No.	8229	Survey Date	MAR 15
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Client  
**CgMs CONSULTING**

Project Title  
**GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY - BELL FARM, KEMPSTON, BEDFORD**

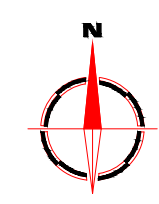
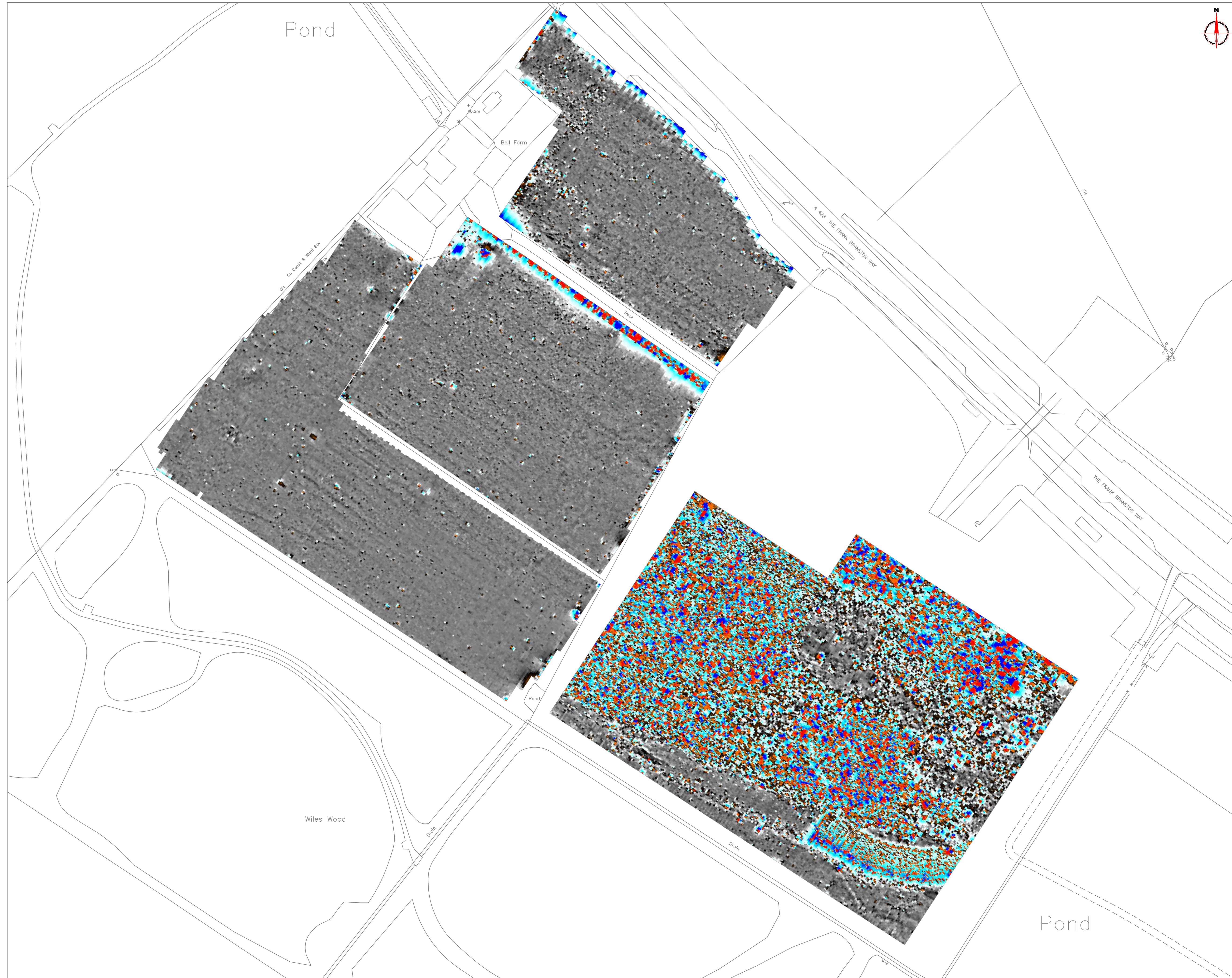
Subject  
**SITE LOCATION, SURVEY AREA & REFERENCING**

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 VINEYARD HOUSE T: 01684 592266  
 UPTON UPON SEVERN E: info@stratascan.co.uk  
 WR8 0SA www.stratascan.co.uk

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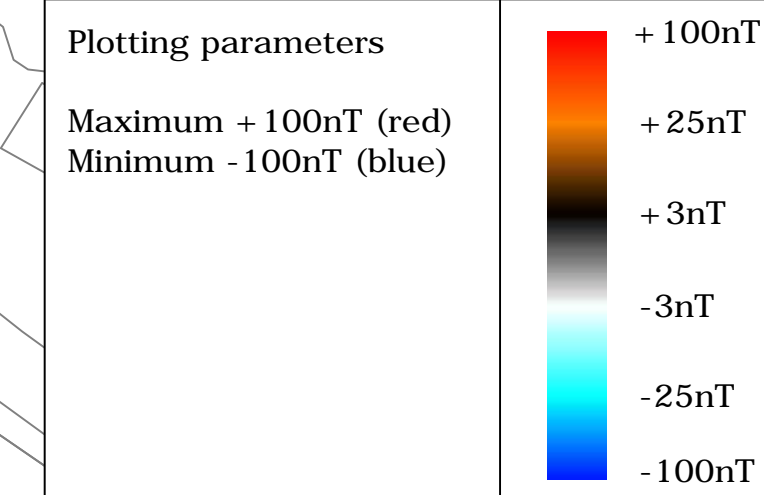




**Amendments**

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**GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY - BELL FARM, KEMPSTON, BEDFORD**

Subject  
**COLOUR PLOT OF GRADIOMETER DATA SHOWING EXTREME VALUES**

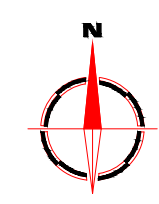
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Scale  
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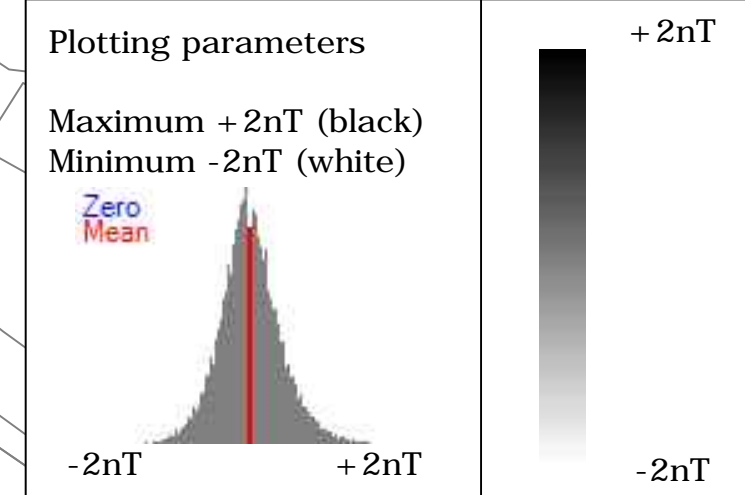




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Issue No.	Date	Description
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**GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY - BELL FARM, KEMPSTON, BEDFORD**

Subject  
**PLOT OF MINIMALLY PROCESSED GRADIOMETER DATA**

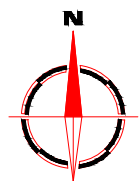
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Scale 1:1000  
0m 10 20 30 40 50 60m

Plot	A1	Checked by	DGE	Issue No.	01
Date	APR 15	Drawn by	RD	Figure No.	03





**Amendments**

Issue No.	Date	Description
-	-	-
-	-	-

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**PROBABLE ARCHAEOLOGY**

- Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - probable cut feature of archaeological origin
- Negative anomaly / weak negative anomaly - probable bank or earthwork of archaeological origin

**POSSIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY**

- Positive anomaly / weak positive anomaly - possible cut feature of archaeological origin
- Negative anomaly / weak negative anomaly - possible bank or earthwork of archaeological origin

**MEDIEVAL/POST-MEDIEVAL AGRICULTURE**

- Closely spaced parallel linear anomalies - probably related to agricultural activity such as ploughing
- Linear anomaly - probably related to a former field boundary not present on available mapping
- Linear anomaly - related to a former field boundary present on available mapping

**OTHER ANOMALIES**

- Linear anomaly - probably related to pipe, cable or other modern service
- Magnetic disturbance associated with nearby metal object such as service or field boundary
- Scattered magnetic debris - related to track way used in construction of the A428, visible on aerial photography
- Strong magnetic debris - related to construction of the A428, visible on aerial photography
- Linear anomaly - related to track way used in construction of the A428, visible on aerial photography
- Scattered magnetic debris
- Area of amorphous magnetic variation - probably natural (e.g. geological or pedological) origin
- Magnetic spike - probable ferrous object

Job No.	8229	Survey Date	MAR 15
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Client  
**CgMs CONSULTING**

Project Title  
**GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY - BELL FARM, KEMPSTON, BEDFORD**

Subject  
**ABSTRACTION AND INTERPRETATION OF GRADIOMETER ANOMALIES**

**STRATASCAN™**  
GEOPHYSICS FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND ENGINEERING  
VINEYARD HOUSE UPTON UPON SEVERN WR8 0SA T: 01684 592266 E: info@stratascan.co.uk www.stratascan.co.uk



Scale  
**1:1000**

Plot	A1	Checked by	DGE	Issue No.	01
Date	APR 15	Drawn by	RD	Figure No.	04

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